

ist eine von Leslau veranlaßte Übersetzung (S. 174-178) aus dem Amharischen. Das über den Wortbestand des Textes weit hinausgehende Zway-English und English-Zway Dictionary (S. 180-321, das schon ins *Etymological Dictionary of Gurage* aufgenommen ist, kann nur durch Abfragen einer vorher erstellten Wortliste entstanden sein. Auch die relativ umfangreiche und vollständige Grammatik in traditionell-beschreibender Darstellung verrät nicht ihre Materialbasis. Einige der Sätze der Syntax finden sich im kurzen Beispieltexst; die Paradigmen müssen erfragt worden sein, wie auch das andere Belegmaterial für die verschiedenen sprachlichen Erscheinungen den Eindruck *ad hoc* übersetzter Sätze und Textstücke anhand eines vorbereiteten Korpus einer anderen Sprache (Amharisch) macht. Trotz dieser Einwände vermittelt die Studie einen plastischen Eindruck der sprachlichen Strukturen dieser bisher kaum bekannten Sprache und dient der vergleichenden Erforschung des Äthiopisch-Semitischen.

Ronny Meyer M. A. (Universität Mainz, SFB 295 Projekt C3, das Rez. 1997 initiiert hat, mit dem er aber die Zusammenarbeit als Semitist im Jahre 2002 wegen Kollegenverhaltens aufgeben mußte) hat seit 1998 verschiedene mehrmonatige Feldstudien zum Zay durchgeführt. Somit ergibt sich der glückliche Fall, daß für eine schon um 1950 gefährdete Sprache aufgrund der geringen Sprecherzahl und deren Zweisprachigkeit (mit der dominierenden Staatssprache Amharisch) im Abstand von fünfzig Jahren Material vorgelegt werden kann, das nicht nur das Überleben einer bedrohten Sprache, sondern auch deren Wandel in einem halben Jahrhundert dokumentieren kann. Mit der Veröffentlichung der Monographie von R. Meyer, die eine grammatische Beschreibung (in vielem über Leslau hinausgehend und in Einzelheiten [der Phonologie, der Verbal-morphologie wie der Einordnung in das Gurage-Cluster korrigierend]) und ein Korpus von Texten umfassen wird, ist in der nächsten Zeit zu rechnen. Es ist zu hoffen, daß der Inhalt der Texte auch dem Philologen und Wissenschaftler vom Christlichen Orient neues Material bieten wird.

Manfred Kropp

Wolf Leslau: *Introductory Grammar of Amharic*. (Porta Linguarum Orientalium, Neue Serie, Hrsg. von Werner Diem und Franz Rosenthal, Bd. 21) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000. 49,- Euro

In the last ten years the well-known Ethiopianist Wolf Leslau has published six monographs on Ethiopian languages or on topics related to them. His last work is the *Introductory Grammar of Amharic*. After Leslau published his voluminous *Reference Grammar of Amharic* in 1995, he now presents a smaller and more concise grammatical outline of Amharic in the present work which is intended for beginners.

In the *Introductory Grammar*, language data from the previously published *Reference Grammar* are used¹ without any reference to it. Leslau also does not mention Yonas Admasu² and his other

1 One table in the appendix of both books even appears with the same printing errors. So, in table II (p. 208) of the *Introductory Grammar* the Amharic form for »my house« is given as ቤተ and as *bet-e* in the transliteration (correct form: ቤተ). The expression »your time« (also table II p. 208) was wrongly written with the 1st order vowel of the consonant *h* ሂህ for *gize-h* (correct form: ሂህ). The same typing errors appear on page 1020 in his *Reference Grammar*. Other parts of the *Reference Grammar* are incorporated into the *Introductory Grammar* with only some minor changes (cf. *Reference Grammar* p. 154ff. on the noun phrase and *Introductory Grammar* p. 35ff. for the same topic).

consultants³, who contributed to the aforementioned *Reference Grammar*. That's why I would like to repeat here Leslau's acknowledgments to Yonas from the *Reference Grammar* (1995: XXII-XXIII):

»In particular, I am indebted to Yonas Admasu ... [H]e generated most of the examples cited in this grammar [i. e. the *Reference Grammar*]. He took a personal interest in helping to solve the many problems from grammatical as well as from practical point of view...«

In the introductory section of the present grammar (p. XV) Leslau simply lists the Semitic languages of Ethiopia without giving much detail.⁴ He takes *Gurage* as a cluster of dialects, i. e. as a single language. This assumption is not commonly accepted among linguists dealing with the area (see for instance Hetzron 1972 and 1977, Gutt 1980)⁵ and has nothing to do with an Amharic grammar. It is true that Amharic has been and still is the official language of Ethiopia, but the situation changed in 1991 when, in addition to Amharic, other languages were also given official status (i. e. Oromo, Tigrinya, Somali etc.). They are used as a medium of instruction in schools and teacher training colleges, as well as in the administration. The main lingua franca in towns, however, is still Amharic.

In his bibliography Leslau indicates two works on Amharic that should be used »only by the specialist«: M. Cohen's *Nouvelles études d'éthiopien méridional*, 1939 and W. Leslau's *Reference Grammar of Amharic*, 1995. The term »specialist« is neither applied to works written in Amharic nor to more linguistic oriented grammars like Hartmann (1980) or Titov (1971), which he also mentioned. Thus, the meaning of the word »specialist« remains somewhat vague.

Furthermore, on commenting on ባዩ ያማም ፡ የአማርኛ ሰዋሰው. [Baye Yimam. yä'amarəñña säwasəw.] Addis Ababa 1987 E. C.⁶, Leslau writes that it »... is the first grammar written in Amharic that applies methods of modern linguistics« (p. XVIII); he does not take into account the work of Hailu Fulass⁷, which appeared in the mid 70ies. It is a grammar based on the theory of transformational grammar, which was quite modern at that time, i. e. actually Hailu Fulass was the first to employ up-to-date linguistic theories to analyze the grammar of Amharic.

Leslau organizes the present grammar according to the scheme of his former grammar books. He first starts with a short introduction into the language situation in Ethiopia (pp. XV and XVI). Then Leslau follows with a selected bibliography containing only the main works on Amharic (pp. XVII-XIX), a section on the grammar of Amharic (pp. 1-179), an English (pp. 182-193) as well as an Amharic index to the grammar section (pp. 194-203), and an appendix containing tables with the syllabary and several paradigms (pp. 206-232).

2 Dr. Yonas Admasu is currently associate professor at the Institute of Language Studies, Addis Ababa University.

3 These were in particular: Hailu Fulass, Abraham Demoz, Getachew Haile, Gideon Goldenberg and Olga Kapeliuk (cf. Leslau 1995: XXII).

4 The languages Gafat and Ge'ez are, to the best of my knowledge, extinct.

5 Gutt, Ernst-August. 1980. »Intelligibility and interlingual comprehension among selected Gurage speech varieties«, *JES* 19 (1976-79), 57-85. – Hetzron, Robert. 1977. *The Gunnän-Gurage languages*. Ricerche (Istituto orientale di Napoli), 12, Napoli. – Hetzron, Robert. 1972. *Ethiopian Semitic: studies in classification*. Journal of Semitic studies. Monograph no. 2, Manchester.

6 The Ethiopian calendar (E. C.) differs from the Gregorian calendar by seven or eight years. As the new year in Ethiopia begins on the 11th of September the difference up to that date is eight years and after that date seven years. Actually, Baye's grammar appeared not in 1995/96 but 1994/95 Gregorian Calendar.

7 ኃይሉ ፋላስ ፡ ሥርዐታዊ ያማርኛ ሰዋሰው ፡ የኢትዮጵያ ቋንቋዎችና ሥነጽሑፍ ክፍል ፡ ብሔራዊ የኢሸርሲቲ ፡ አዲስ አበባ ፡ ፲፱፻፷፯ ዓ. ም. [Hailu Fulass. sər'atawi yamarəñña säwasəw. Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature, National University, Addis Ababa, 1966 E. C.].

As the present grammar is intended to be of practical use for beginners in Amharic, Leslau uses a »phonetic transcription and a literal translation« (p. XVI) throughout the grammar for the explanation of the language examples. Actually, his phonetic transcription is a transliteration of the Amharic syllabary graphemes. Leslau uses only a very free literal translation of the cited Amharic examples thus making it very difficult for the beginner, who is not a Semitist or »specialist«, to understand the constructions in the grammar. In addition to the fact that Leslau's literal translation cannot replace an interlinear version to explain the grammatical as well as morphophonological processes in Amharic, it lacks consistency.

Using the Semitistic tradition Leslau divides the grammar section into phonology (1-16), pronoun (17-33), noun (34-47), adjective (48-49), numerals (50-54), copula (54-56), verb (57-127), positional relations (128-139), conjunctions (140-152), clauses (153-170), adverbs (171-173), enclitics (174-177) and interjections (178-179).

The *Phonology* deals mainly with the Amharic script. Leslau describes the phonemes of the language based on the graphemes. Furthermore, a statement like: »It is for the sake of a convenient terminology that the Amharic syllabary will be called 'alphabet' and the combination of a consonant with a vowel will be termed 'consonant'.« (p. 4) only confuses the beginner; it is of no practical relevance for the grammar because it does not appear again in the whole book. When Leslau writes that in written Amharic 33 consonants appear as grapheme (p. 4 § 4.2.) but in spoken Amharic only 31 consonants are used (p. 1 § 1.1.), then the first number excludes labio-velars⁸ while the second number includes them. When one takes also /v/ as a phoneme in Amharic, as Leslau argues on p. 1, then the number of 31 consonants becomes 32 (including labio-velars). In the chart of consonants (p. 1) the labio-velars are given as glottals and the voiced labial fricative /v/ is missing. In the description of the various syllabary signs (cf. §§ 6 to 9, p. 5f) Leslau mentions the signs for *r* and *f* with their respective vowels in § 13.2 (p. 8) under the heading »13. The consonants with the vowel o...« where nobody would have expected them. The signs **ሐ** [hu], **ጠ** [tu], **ፈ** [çu] and all graphemes for /v/, i. e. **ሸ** : **ሹ** : **ሺ** : **ሻ** : **ሼ** : **ሽ** : **ሾ** are missing. It remains unclear what Leslau means by »long vowels occur only occasionally« (p. 3) as he never gives an occasion where such a long vowel appears. In addition to the vowel symbols explained in § 3.1. (p. 3) he uses two further symbols *ú* (cf. p. 4 § 3.8., p. 87 § 90) and *ä* (p. 87 § 90) without any comment on their utterance.

In his transliteration Leslau generally does not mark person, gender and number affixes. He does, however, indicate object suffixes attached to the verb. He sometimes employs different boundaries for the same morpheme, as in *all-äb*⁹ (p. 25 § 34.3.4.) against *allä-b* (p. 29 § 34.16) both meaning »you have«.¹⁰

These inconsistencies become even plainer when we consider Leslau's treatment of the suffix *-n*. He describes the occurrence of this element as follows: »If the direct object is determined ... it is expressed by the suffixed element **-ገ** [-n].« (p. 42-43). This definition is followed by: »In a general statement the marker **-ገ** [-n] may also be used with the noun that is not determined ...« (p. 43).

This is only partially correct. The only example Leslau provides is:

8 In § 4.2. the number 33 is a result of counting all graphemes of Amharic even if they represent only one consonant in spoken Amharic.

9 Throughout the article I use Leslau's transliteration.

10 An interlinear version could have been like: *all-ä-b* consisting of the verb stem *all-* for »exist«, the suffix *-ä* to indicate 3rd person singular masculine in the perfective aspect and the object suffix *-b* for the 2nd person singular masculine. This expression has the literary meaning »it exists [for] you« meaning »you have [something]«.

አገዚአብሔር ሰውን በአምሳሉ ፈጠረ ።

əgziʔabəher säw-n bā-amsal-u fäṭṭärä

»God created man in his image« (p. 43)

The noun *säw* »man« in this occurrence is definite because it refers to mankind as a single entity or, in other words, God created a man and nothing else. Consequently, personal names as well as pronouns which are inherently definite take the accusative marker *-n* in the direct object position even if they are not determined morphologically. On page 164 one can find the following example:

ይህንን ወንዝ እንዴት እንደ ተሻገረው አላውቅም

yəhən-n wänz əndet

əndä-täšaggärä-w

alawq-əmm

this-n

river

how-that-he-crossed-it

I-don't-know

»I don't know how he crossed this river«

Leslau's transliteration of the demonstrative pronoun *yəhənən* is not correct. The pronoun itself is only *yəh*, i. e. the first *-n* is actually not part of it. The morphemes involved in this example are actually:

yəh-ən-ən

this-accusative-focus¹¹.

It is also possible to omit the last *-n* in this example. This creates a slight change in meaning: while in the above quoted example the NP »this river« is in focus, it will be unmarked when only *yəh-ən* is used. Focus constructions are also involved in the sentences referred to by Leslau (p. 154) as follows: »An initial noun with *-ገ* [-n] »as for« is resumed by prepositional suffix pronouns or by object suffix pronouns ...«, i. e. that the marker *-n* also appears suffixed to indirect objects or subjects as in (p. 154):

ብርሃኖቼውን ወተት ጠጣበት

bərčəqqo-wən wätät tättä-bb-ät

as-for-the-glass milk drink-in-it

»drink milk in the glass!«

The positional phrase *bərčəqqowən* »in the glass« bears the most important information in the sentence and it is also marked by the suffixation of *-n* for focus. One can omit this final *-n* by using a preposition with an indefinite noun, like *bäbərčəqqo* »with [the] glass«. Even if further research is necessary to describe the focus marking strategies in Amharic, Leslau should have at least indicated these problems or should have omitted those sentences in a grammar for beginners.

Leslau's way of presenting the data would have been much more comprehensive if he had analyzed and described the distribution and function of the grammatical elements in Amharic rather than taking English as a starting point and then looking for the Amharic equivalents. This would have led to more uniformity in a (beginner's) grammar instead of repetitively describing the same morpheme under different headings¹². Because Leslau did not consider the function of certain elements in Amharic, he gives incorrect examples. In § 30.1. on page 21 Leslau describes አኔው *ənew* as a reflexive pronoun:

እኔው አመጣለሁ ።

əne-w əmətallähu

»I myself will come«

11 I checked the sentences which seemed strange to me with two native speakers of Amharic: Fasika Alämmiräw, 20 years old from Welqite and Girma Awgichew, 34 years old from Addis Ababa. I also thank Girma very much for the various constructive discussions we had on Amharic grammar.

12 The prefix *bä-* for instance is analyzed as preposition (p. 129) and as conjunction (p. 146 and 170).

The combination of the independent personal pronoun **እኔ** »I« and the definite marker *-w* is a way of emphasizing the pronoun and may, therefore, be rendered into English as »I myself«. Grammatically, this structure is not a reflexive pronoun in Amharic.

In addition, if Leslau had taken Amharic as the source language and English only as the meta language translation errors could have been avoided. Here I would like to quote only the most peculiar constructions which seem to be good English but not good Amharic:

?መኪና መንዳት አላውቅም :: (p. 84 § 83.3.)

»I don't know how to drive a car.«

In Amharic the verb »to be able« is usually used in a sentence such as the following:

መኪና መንዳት አልችልም ::

»I can't drive a car.«

If one wants to express a meaning like »I never drove a car«, the Amharic version would be **መኪና ነድጅ አላውቅም**, i. e. a converb construction in the subordinate clause.

In the following sentence the marking of the indirect object on the verb is obligatory:

?ደብዳቤ ለገበሬ ጻፍኩ :: (p. 44 § 41.1.)

»I wrote a letter to the farmer.«

Instead of the verb **ጻፍኩ** the use of the verb **ጻፍኩለት** and a definite indirect object **ለገበሬው** would have yielded a more common sentence structure.

In English the sentence: »We rode in the car while Alämu did the driving« (p. 140 § 122.1) would have been better rendered into Amharic with: **ዓለሙ መኪና አየነዳ ሂድን ::**

Due to his focusing on English rather than on Amharic even ungrammatical sentences were produced, e. g.: ***በቀን በቀን አታክልት አመጣ ::** or ***ጧት ጧት በስምንት ሰዓት ተነሣ ::** (p. 26 § 34.7.). The adverbs in these example sentences indicate a repetitive or habitual action. It is impossible to end those sentences with a verb in a perfective aspect, instead the imperfective with the auxiliary for the past tense¹³ has to be used, i. e. the sentences would be grammatical with the main verbs changed to **ያመጣ ነበር** or **ደነሣ ነበር**, respectively.

His statement: »The form of respect is used with the plural form of the verb or of the copula.« (p. 17) is not correct as there is a special form for the copula, 2nd person respect:

እርስዎ ... ነዎት

ərswo ... näwot

you (respect) are ...

It is also not clear to me why Leslau writes: »In titles, the archaic ordinal numerals that end in *-a* **፲** *-awi* are used« (p. 52). The suffix *-awi* is an adjective marker and not archaic, but very productive. Only words used as numerals with the suffix *-awi* are archaic; they are loans from Ge'ez.

Not only is Leslau conservative in his approach to describing Amharic, but in addition, there are lots of misprints in the book that yield incorrect utterances. On page 32 one reads:

***ማንኛውም ውሰድ!**

mann-əñña-w-əmm wəsäd!

»take whichever you like«

Since the object is a pronoun which is additionally marked with a definite marker, the correct form would have been: **ማንኛውንም** *mann-əñña-w-n-əmm*, i. e. with the accusative marker *-n*. A further misprint is found on page 88:

13 Cf. Girma Awgichew and Ronny Meyer. (2001). »Reexamination of Tense and Aspect in Amharic«, *AAP* 65, 143-155.

አመምከኝ

ammämk-änn

»you hurt me, you caused me pain«.

The given verbal form አመምከኝ does not exist in Amharic, instead አሳመምከኝ *asammämk-änn* should be inserted.

Sometimes phrases or words are used which are currently not considered proper Amharic, i. e. they are old terms which have only a specialized meaning or have evolved due to language contact. Nowadays instead of the phrase ተማሪ ቤት (p. 128) for »school« ትምህርት ቤት is commonly used. The phrase *በስተፊት (p. 131) seems also to be a little bit strange as most of the time either ፊት ለፊት or በፊት ለፊት is used to express »in front of«. The feminine counterpart of ሽማግሌ is not *ሽማግሊት (p. 37) but አሮጊት in Amharic. The word ሽማግሊት has a pejorative connotation and is used only as an insult. The same seems to be true for በጊት (p. 37); the commonly used form is በጊትዋ or በጊዋ.

In addition it would have been very helpful for the beginner if Leslau had indicated the productivity of certain derivations. Words like ነጩት : ጥቁሪት : ደጊት (p. 37) are very rare. In most of the cases they are only used in a kind of very familiar speech. The more neutral forms in the discourse are not marked for gender. Only on the copula or verb is gender agreement indicated, as also shown by Leslau in § 47.2. (p. 54) or § 48.4. (p. 56).

The negative copula አይደለም *aydolām* (p. 55 § 48) is archaic and not used frequently. The same is true for the usage of አይደለ *aydälä* for relative and subordinate forms (p. 56 § 48.3) of the negative present tense copula. Today these forms appear mainly in the former Gondar region. However, more common in standard Amharic¹⁴ is ያልሆነ *yalhonä*.

The Gondarine influence of Leslau's language informant is apparent in § 151. p. 170 where he uses ኑሮ *nuro* as well as ኖሮ *noro* as gerund (i.e. converb) of the verb ኖረ *norä*. While the standard form is ኖሮ *noro*, the converb ኑሮ *nuro* is used in the Gondar area. Another trace of Gondar influence can be seen in the usage of the conjunction ዘንድ *zänd* »in order to, so that« (p. 145). In standard Amharic this conjunction is used very rarely, most often only in frozen phrases used in official letters. In every day communication the prefix አንድ *and-* is used to express »in order to, so that«.

In general it seems that the present *Introductory Grammar* lacks a good methodological and didactic approach¹⁵ to guide the beginner through the grammar of Amharic. Until now, in my opinion, the beginner should still refer to the more comprehensive works of Appleyard (1995)¹⁶ and Richter (1987)¹⁷. Even though these books are textbooks, they introduce the beginner to the basics of Amharic grammar in a well-organised and easy way. Leslau's *Introductory Grammar*, however, is a good source book for Semitists who are dealing with Amharic, yet not as good as his *Reference Grammar*.

Ronny Meyer

14 Standard Amharic refers to the variety spoken in Addis Ababa which is also taught at schools and written in the newspapers.

15 When Leslau starts with the explanation of the vowel phonemes (p. 3), he introduces the term »seven orders« but does not explain it until page 4. In § 43.5-§ 43.7 (p. 46f) he also uses the method of showing some nominal patterns by using the three »dummy« radicals Q-T-L. Actually, a word using these radicals does not exist in Amharic, so he should have marked them as hypothetical.

16 Appleyard, David. 1995. *Colloquial Amharic. A Complete Language Course*. London and New York: Routledge.

17 Richter, Renate. 1987. *Lehrbuch der Amharischen Sprache*. Leipzig: Enzyklopädie Verlag.